I’ll be hosting a Sims AMA on r/Sims3 - Sunday May 11th at 11am PDT
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Community: r/Sims3
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Hey all! I’m **Matt Brown** \- I directed **Sims 3** at Maxis/EA. I was also the technical director and design lead for **Sims 2** and the creative/design director for some assorted **Sims 4** EP/GP/SPs (and the return of toddlers).

I thought I might hang out here and answer any questions or curiosities y’all might have. Pretty much everything is fair game. Things you love, things you hate, things you WTF. Allow me to explain... :)

Proof

https://preview.redd.it/60fch3brqeze1.jpg?width=3840&format=pjpg&auto=webp&s=f93c897f5a60c182e39a39b6b836ae3e06ecdd41

* [GDC talk on emergent storytelling](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjuOSgPdtS0)
* [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/mattador)

Over the years, I’ve also accumulated dozens of Sims prototypes that I’ve begun sporadically showcasing on my personal website [butteryawesome.com](https://www.butteryawesome.com), and you can find some rambly designerish videos of some of those experiments and other random tidbits on my unprofessional YouTube channel here (@[butteryawesome](https://www.youtube.com/@butteryawesome)).

I’ll be back here at **11am this Sunday, May 11** until I run out of answers (I’ll circle back later for stragglers).

Feel free to post questions here now if you want to get warmed up (although I won’t go at it til Sunday).

Looking forward to chatting!

EDIT: I have not been at EA/Maxis since 2018, so I can’t speak to later DLC and can only speculate about future plans (which I’m happy to do though :)).

EDIT #2: And that’s a wrap! (for now anyway) Thanks so much for all of the thoughtful

questions and the appreciative bits. The Sims 3 was very extra particularly special to me and to the team, and it’s been great getting to ramble on about it with people who find it special it too. I intend to respond to every question over the next few days as I have time. Feel free to add any additional questions that suddenly occur to you in the middle of the night as well. I’ll keep the thread "open" until one of us runs out of things to say.

COMMENTS (68 fetched)

[u/AlliHarri] [1 pts] [May 10, 2025]
Start time in other time zones:

EDT: 14:00

CDT: 13:00

UTC: 18:00

BST: 19:00

CEST: 20:00

[u/survivorfan1123] [113 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Were there any scrapped EP ideas? Also, were there any ideas you pushed for that never made it into the game?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [68 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Well, this probably isn’t a fun answer :), but I really can’t recall any particularly interesting expansion pack ideas that were thrown away entirely. One thing about designing the Sims at that level is that every pack needs to be broadly appealing, because we don’t release that many of them and they take a long time to create (SPs not withstanding, which can be more niche). I know people sometimes complain how many were released, but trust me, we thought carefully about each of them :). EPs in particular need to satisfy all of the core player types and play styles (story tellers, builders, CASers, dollhousers, etc.), and any EP idea has to have fertile ground in all of those areas.

What does happen pretty commonly though is that a pack idea is deemed too small or too big, and then it gets either expanded or combined with another concept, or if it’s too big, it might get chopped up into multiple, possibly smaller packs. Sometimes the approach changes from iteration to iteration.

In Sims 3 for example, vampires, werewolves and whatnot were combined as none was deep enough to support an entire EP, but in Sims 4, we felt vampires had enough in them once you wpul from the Buffys, Twilights, What We Do in Shadows etc. that they could support a GP. And the team itself is usually so in tune with what fits with the Sims that while there are

wacky ideas during brainstorms, they get whittled down pretty early.

As for ideas that I pushed for that didn't make it... Probably the biggest, and it's not really a single feature, but it was really important to the core of the game was in Sims 3. Central to the "reinvention" of the game was this idea that you were moving up Maslow's hierarchy (both the Sims and the players). Sims in earlier games spent much of their time worried about peeing and sleeping and starving. And the bulk of the design detail was at that level. But in modern life, that's not what most people spend most of their time thinking about.

They're thinking about how they're going to maybe pay rent. They're thinking about how they're going to get fired and if they're raising their kids right, and higher order goals like that. And I wanted to shift the entire experience to those higher level needs and desires and away from the emphasis on peeing and the sleeping and the eating. And I wanted the underlying systems and simulation to shift the detail to those elements and remove detail from the lower order needs.

We tried probably a dozen different ways of doing that, and it just became clear that we weren't going to be able to maintain the semblance of a little being going through its daily routine while maintaining the flexibility and potential for emergent chaos without those motives. I'm proud of the progress we made though, and I think Sims 3 definitely takes the emphasis off of the peeing significantly, while leaving those motives to serve their purpose as part of the simulation. So from a player mindset, I think, I guess we did technically ship it, although mechanically I was never able to get rid of those motives entirely as I'd hoped.

[u/move_along_home] [75 pts] [May 8, 2025]
How do you come up with the item descriptions in build/buy?

[u/cynicalisathot] [16 pts] [May 8, 2025]
omg gotta know!!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [77 pts] [May 11, 2025]
The item descriptions, I think, are something that it's easy to take for granted, and definitely lots of people never even read them. But generally the way it worked was someone on the team, usually a producer, who had a particularly appropriate sense of humor, who "got it" and was a decent writer, would take it on. And then they would work their way through them bit by bit as the game was developed. We've had a professional dedicated writer from time to time as well.

At various times, we tried to codify the style to keep things consistent, but for the most part, that consistency came from the fact that the people writing the the descriptions were/are really big fans of The Sims and were very familiar with the tone of the games that came before them. So they sort of organically played it forward.

I think that scrappy human-ness and that lack of any heavy structure is part of what gives it that weird charm.

[u/jannaromantic] [55 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Were there any Sims 2 features (more advanced memories, turn ons/offs, hobby enthusiasm, story events for the premade households) planned to be added to the Sims 3 at some point, but scrapped?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [74 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I don’t know if this is quite what you’re getting at, but one feature that I was particularly excited about in Sims 3 that we didn’t end up shipping was actually kind of behind the scenes, and that was this idea that your Sims would be actually acquiring internal memories that the player didn’t explicitly see.

So they would have sort of a record inside of themselves, of the things that had happened to them, where they’d been, that sort of a thing. And then different features in the game could pull from those memories/events and manifest them in various ways or have them influence some other system or behavior.

So for example, if you took your Sim to the beach at sunset, they might add that into themselves as a memory, and then when you ask them to paint a painting, a few days later, they might paint the sunset. So that would be more subtle, but it would make the Sims feel alive and as if they were carrying along their experiences.

And because the memories/events could be basically anything, and any system in the game could draw from that same pool of experiences, the Sims could feel more like evolving deep little beings more than hamsters.

Another way to think of it might be as if the Sims were collecting their own little personality traits based on their experiences. But instead of "sloppy", they might acquire "saw a beautiful sunset" with secret screenshot of the sunset attached. The rest of the game could then tap into them for fun things just like they might "neat" or "no sense of humor".

[u/pomegranate-goose] [3 pts] [Jul 28, 2025]
This sounds so cool. I’m kind of sad it didn’t make it in.

[u/stegosnoreaus] [53 pts] [May 8, 2025]
This is really cool! I’m curious to know if there are any in-game features (in any iterations, but esp Sims 3) that you feel like not many people know about? Or any features that didn’t get the traction you expected?

Also, are there any interesting in-game features that didn’t make it into the final version(s) that people may not know about? If so, why didn’t they make it in?

Super appreciate this AMA! Thanks for sharing your knowledge with all of us here!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [41 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Absolutely! I love talking about The Sims and gaming history and development in general.

And that’s a really good question. I’m sure I’m missing something (I’ll post back here after I poll some of the other designers). I think at this point, the game has been around long enough, and the community is so passionate about digging in and finding everything that I really don’t think there’s anything super secret hiding in there.

At this point, I can say that the best chance of there being something that no one’s ever seen is probably in The Sims 3, just because we made it so easy to add random little features or little one-offs, Non-art content (e.g. books) were so incredibly cheap to make that it didn’t really matter if no one ever saw it. You could still justify slipping it in. But looking through the wikis, I can’t think of anything that people haven’t found.

The meaning behind some of the random text and objects might not be known, or the origins of common terms like "rabbit holes", "moodlets", etc. But those aren’t really easter eggs per se.

One huge planned Sim 3 "feature" that many of us felt very passionately about was full player scripting of new content in C# (a well-known flexible programming language). I was and still am a C# fanboy, and I felt that moving away from the rickety visual scripting language in Sims 1 and 2 (called Edith) to a "real programming language" that was still accessible to hobbyists would significantly open up what we could do with the game as well as allow us to give players the same capabilities and just generally unleash the crazy :).

The goal was to basically provide a "Sims SDK" with a robust and documented API that anyone could use to create pretty much every type of content in the game. Objects, interactions, careers, rabbit holes, new motives... anything.

In the end though, The Sims really was the first game/entertainment oriented product to actually try to use C# in that way (Unity, which uses C# extensively, didn’t even exist yet). And while we managed to build the game on that foundation, and the flexibility of it definitely enabled the crazy breadth and depth of The Sims 3, enabling it for players ran into too many additional hurdles (legal, security and safety, performance, etc.) and had to be cut. Bruce Wilkie (also the guy that did genetics in Sims 2 amongst many other things) was driving everything C# related and made amazing progress, but we just couldn’t address all of the complications.

[u/stegosnoreaus] [10 pts] [May 13, 2025]
Thank you for such a thoughtful response! That’s really interesting. It sounds like you really wanted to give players an open-ended experience (which I think you achieved, even if it wasn’t through implementation of a player-accessible coding language) - the open world is one of many reasons that The Sims 3 is my favourite in the series.

If you are willing to share anything about little known meanings behind in-game text, objects, terms, etc I would definitely be interested in hearing more!

Also I’m curious if there are any in-game features that, while perhaps have been fully explored by players, maybe you feel deserve more attention (or just that you’re passionate about)? I recently got a PC for the sake of playing The Sims 3 and it’s interesting revisiting the game after a few years and seeing which hobbies/gameplay functions I’m most

interested in now in my 30s vs when I first got the game as a teenager, so I'd love to get another perspective on things that you thought were really cool (even if it's something as specific as "there's this one secret island in Isla Paradiso that more people should build on!").

Either way, thank you so much for your time with this AMA and for your work on this awesome game!

[u/OcarinaGamer4] [43 pts] [May 8, 2025]
The Sims 2 Bella Goth plot line, what was the inspiration for her to go missing? Fan circles have speculated for years that it was because she was accidentally deleted during the games creation but that always sounded far fetched to me. Also, what sims 3 and 2 towns would you choose to live in? I love Sunset Valley and Bridgeport!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [32 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Wow. You guys are really into Bella :). I confess I don't actually recall what the actual reason for that was, or if there was a deeper reason than just it sounding interesting. (if someone's here from the dev team that remembers better, please chime in :))

Really the only constraints we put on those stories were that, we wanted them to be true to the players who knew these characters and their histories from previous games/packs, and we had usually had some design requirements. We often wanted to show off the diversity of new game mechanics, whether it's genders or personality traits, aging, whatever... anything, that would showcase as much of the game as possible across these different families. But beyond that, I don't know. It definitely was not that she was deleted. We have backups of backups of everything. And you know, recreating a character like that, is not particularly difficult. It's a fun theory though :).

As for which towns/neighborhoods I would live in... I know they're not the objectively "best", but honestly, I'd live in Pleasantview and Sunset Valley. I just spent so much time with those OG towns during development that they're special to me. And they're cozy for all of the little quirks and things that I can see that could have been better and that were often improved upon significantly in subsequent towns/neighborhoods/worlds. But I love 'em :)

[u/thisisembarrazzing] [36 pts] [May 8, 2025]
I have no questions but I just want to say Sims 3 is my favourite game of all time!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [28 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Thanks! I really appreciate that. Sims 3 is really extra particularly special to me too :)

[u/[deleted]] [34 pts] [May 8, 2025]
What gameplay ideas sounded good on paper but were horrible to implement? Did any of them make the cut?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [36 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Well, I don't think this is maybe quite what you mean, but in Sims 2, where we introduced genetics, or playdough genetics at any rate, where your children would inherit physical

traits of the parents, that was a feature that I really, really wanted. I prototyped it myself in a little app with actual art (thank you Charles London :)). You could mix and match facial parts, edit a mom face and a dad face, and then keep making kids to see that they look like the parents and that they didn't fall apart or break down (at least not in the prototype :)). I even made each change or baby generation needlessly squashy stretchy bouncy so that it would feel playful for no reason. Whenever you generated a new head, it went BOING.

That took me maybe three days, maybe a long weekend, and I showed it off, and the team loved it. But actually translating that into something that worked within the incredibly complicated environment of The Sims, and so that the Sims could do everything that Sims need to do, all of the things necessary for a sim to be a real sim while looking like their parents in the actual game was significantly harder.

And the outstanding engineer implementing that, Bruce Wilkie, then had to spend almost a year just getting back to what I had hacked together all smoke and mirrors and shown off in a little prototype. I'm still apologizing to him for that, but the end result, I think, was pretty awesome. There are little issues with it, but I think just that it exists, is amazing.

Another feature that I can think of along those lines would be, anytime we try to script or overly direct Sims behavior. It always seems like something that it should be easy to do, or that's necessary, but then just the nature of everything else in The Sims is so emergent and organic. It's just so against the grain of what The Sims is that just never works. You see this in, I think a lot of Sims 4 expansion packs (although it's not unique to them), where there's extensive "scripted" behavior (e.g. restaurants). The scripting fights against the existing emergent systems. And it also loses a lot of the opportunity for emergence that is inherent in the underlying simulation. Just loosely bounding them a little bit, but not not actually prescribing what they do, ends up being far more interesting.

So those are more a class of features that somehow always make it in. They're much harder to implement than people imagine, and then they largely don't work very well.

[u/[deleted]] [7 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Thank you so much for all your answers, that's so interesting to learn!!

[u/wickeddradon] [25 pts] [May 8, 2025]
I have been playing the Sims since the first game came out. I have all of the Sims 1, 2, and 3 games on discs. I have some of the Sims 4 but it's horrible, doesn't have the heart the other games have. I'm discovering new things all the time. I don't really have any questions but I would like to congratulate you and the others who created these games.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [38 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Thank you so much! That's very sweet. I can definitely say that we really really enjoyed making it. And I know at least a couple of the original Sims 3 devs are here lurking today as well.

The Sims 3 in particular was, I think, the most "free" we've been in dramatically reshaping the game and really thoughtfully embracing and amplifying what makes the Sims special. We had time and trust.

[u/amburgundy] [44 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Was it your idea for meteors to hit schools and take out an entire town's child/teen population in ts3? not cool, man.

Also, would love to hear more about the development & design processes of the cowplant & of plantsims- what did early drafts look like? What was changed from the original ideas?

Thank you!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [39 pts] [May 11, 2025]
The meteors aren't specifically my fault, no :). But Sim deaths have an interesting history. When designing Sims 2, we recognized that some Sims 1 players really enjoyed torturing or killing their Sims in funny, creative ways. We really wanted to acknowledge and "yes and" that.

So in subsequent iterations, we tried to come up with more fun ways for Sims to die beyond removing the pool ladder. And initially, the intent was entirely, sort of fan service, or to give players more of what they were enjoying and but not to take away any agency from the player. Over time though, some of that intent has been lost, and various ways to die have been either more catastrophic or game ending than fun emergent storytelling. They've too often become not driven by the player or at a minimum, the player's risk taking.

Unfortunately I wasn't involved with the cow plant, but I did always have a design mantra of 80% stuff you see every day, 15% stuff you have maybe never personally seen but you're sure it happens, and 5% ridiculous/farcical/magical or just weird. The cow plant was clearly in the 5% :)

[u/Sad_Click5373] [21 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Hi Matt! First off, thank you for doing an AMA post.

If this isn't too personal, what's the reason for your departure from EA/Maxis?

Edit: Another question I have is, were the number of Stuff Packs & Expansion Packs to be released for The Sims 3 predetermined during its development?

If not, why did the series end with Into the Future specifically? I'm aware ITF coincided with TS4 release but TS4 was criticized for being an unfinished game (I.e., no toddlers and no pools in the base game).

Surely EA could've taken time to release more packs for TS3 while simultaneously giving devs extra time to polish TS4?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [28 pts] [May 11, 2025]

I’ve actually left EA/Maxis twice :). Once in 2008 and once in 2018.

Near the end of Sims 3, I began focusing on spinning up Sims 4, largely focusing on identifying the key areas we’d need to dig into first if we wanted to make the Sims an MMO. At the time, I’d made two Sims games end to end, and having witnessed the alpha/beta/live of Sims Online and seen all of the issues, I really wasn’t at all on board with the idea of making another "Sims MMO". I also had the opportunity to go to Blizzard to co-lead the design at the very beginning of a new MMO (ironically enough) that would let me bring my quirky Simsy-ness to a whole new genre. If I was going to learn how MMOs are developed, I figured I should do it where my favorite MMO was made :). That was Titan fwiw. I plan to talk about some of those prototypes on my site and do some deep dive videos in the next little while. It’ll be clear why it was relevant :)

In 2018, the stream of EPs, GPs, and SPs had become a little rote, and I’d spent the last 6-9 months helping spin up a reinvention of SimCity (lead by Eric HW) that had morphed into something more creative and sandboxy and Maxis silly magical to the point that we stopped calling it SimCity. We’d gotten to a place where the studio was seeing something special there, and I wanted to find another way to "pay it forward" I guess. Roblox (what I left for) ended up being the perfect opportunity to work with young creators and to build systems and tools to help them discover game development and content creation and become game developers themselves.

EDIT: Not really, no. We always know we’ll end up making additional content, for no other reason than we had so many fun ideas during base game development that just wouldn’t fit. But I’m not aware that we ever plan packs ahead of time. There are a few "gimmees" like pets that we know we’ll end up doing at some point, but nothing beyond that.

I wasn’t there for the transition from Sims 3 to 4, but from what I understand, there was some regret later that there wasn’t more overlap. I think there’s always a "but if we don’t stop making the old one, they won’t buy the new one" with executives, but I’ve never seen that play out on any franchise I’ve been a part of. New iterations are mostly additive. If you loved the the previous game, you’re not going to ignore the cool new version of it. And just because you buy the new one, you’re not going to throw away the game you’re already so invested in.

[u/Sad_Click5373] [4 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Wow this is great insight. Thank you for the thorough response, Matt! I appreciate all your contributions to The Sims :)

[u/Matias93] [4 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Could you talk more about that SimCity experiment? There’s a prevalent feeling among the people who still plays those games, that Maxis or EA decided not to try anymore with city simulators, and this suggests otherwise, which would be great news! Thanks for the AMA!!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [8 pts] [May 12, 2025]
I can’t talk too much about it, because I know that after I left, it did continue to be developed for at least a year or a year and a half before I lost track of it (from the outside). I don’t know if it’s something that they might revive at some point. What we

ended up pitching though was arguably unrecognizable as SimCity (the project *was* started as a SimCity project though, so I suppose the hope is still alive :))

I can say that the equation is often not that complicated. Basically, the Sim City audience, traditionally is nowhere near a Sims audience, or nowhere near a Battlefield audience, so there has to be a good reason to take something like that on. And there generally has to be some sense that there's less risk than might be normal. In this particular case, it was because there was a lot of passion from the designer (Eric HW again), and we felt that his passion and experience was enough to at least start exploring.

It's also worth noting that along the way, Cities: Skylines kind of just took that crown and ran with it towards the horizon. But I don't know that that's a permanent state. Skylines seems to keep going more and more niche kind of the flight simulator route. And that could, down the line, open up an opportunity for someone like EA and the Sim City brand/IP to come out with something that is accessible and graspable by a much larger audience that eventually might get left behind by Skylines.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [19 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Hey all! Let's get started. I'm going to start by spamming a bunch of answers I've written up as people were posting questions the last few days. I tend to ramble on and make everything about some geeky design thing, so bear with me :).

[u/CadyMoring] [17 pts] [May 8, 2025]
What was the reasoning behind removing the open world? It was such a step backwards. Sims3 is the best and I've played less than 5 hours of Sims 4, just not the same vibe.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [34 pts] [May 11, 2025]
While I was only involved in the first couple of months of planning for Sims 4, my understanding of why the open world was removed was due to the mid-project shift in development goals. Sims 4 was initially designed to be a multiplayer MMO-like experience (although I'm not sure how big the world was or how heavily it relied on streaming... maybe one of the designers who bridged Sim 3 and 4 will see this and chime in :)). As such, it had very different technical requirements and a whole host of its own complexities and hard problems.

My understanding was that once they decided to go back to a single player experience, the shortest path to shipping was to simplify things back to what had worked in Sims 2 (more or less). There just wasn't time to rearchitect everything.

(apologies to anyone who was directly involved for any misrepresentation, but I think that's pretty much the gist)

[u/[deleted]] [16 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Can you reveal some scrapped Sims 2 and 3 expansion pack themes?

[u/Ezuu] [16 pts] [May 8, 2025]
What was your favorite thing to work on for the sims 3? Also now looking back at the game after all these years, what are some thing you would do differently or change if you could?

Finally, I think a lot of us here can say that this game holds a very special place in our hearts and has brought us countless hours of joy. So I wanted to thank you! You and your team's work has been a huge part of my life :)

[u/ButteryAwesome] [30 pts] [May 11, 2025]
It's maybe not the sexiest element of Sims 3, but I would have to say my favorite was probably the personality traits. They were loosely inspired by the advantages and disadvantages system in a tabletop RPG system called GURPS.

The specific implementation in Sims 3, I felt, was very elegant. It was incredibly flexible and easy to add traits that could affect pretty much anything. I think they really, really helped give a lot of character to Sims and a lot of storytelling opportunities. I really, really wish that we'd been able to open up the scripting though so that the community could have created their own personality traits. That would have been magical and justifiably insane.

I also really enjoyed the design process for those and how different people came up with different traits and how they could be manifest in the in the game. Everyone bounced off of each other creatively. A gameplay engineer might be implementing some random object, look at the list of traits and often could trivially add a little tweak or modulation to their system/object based on a Sim having that trait. It all just kept building on itself.

I also have a soft spot for story progression, but I know that's contentious :). The concept and design and the prototype (a Ray Mazza gem) were just this "Oh wow. This can work! And we can do all sorts of cool shit with it!". The reality of implementation in a shipping game unfortunately couldn't quite live up to that prototype hackery (see Sims 2 genetics above), but I still have a soft spot for it. I have a deeper dive on youtube if you're curious about how it was original intended to work.

I also loved the customization. I'd wanted that for Sims 2, but we just weren't ready. That it worked as well as it did is still amazing to me. I still can't believe that that many very talented and patient engineers and artists actually put up with me for so long getting that all to work. It was pretty herculean on their part.

That customization is also one of the things I would have done differently. I've also been a proponent of creativity tools that almost "trick" you into feeling more creative than you actually are :). But the Sims 3 customization was so exhaustive that it wasn't easy to work with. You could do anything in the world, but you had to be an interior designer to make anything look even remotely passable. I still can't make a pretty sofa, but I really enjoy making my ugly ones :).

I would have loved to have focused more attention on the player experience and invested more in making it more accessible to everyone.

(and thanks! it's been a huge part of mine and ours as well :))

[u/AeviDaudi] [15 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Hi there! I have a few questions! What are you currently up to? Any projects you'd like to share?

Then, as someone who fantasizes about working in the industry but really has no idea where to start (and no experience other than minor Bethesda modding) - what inspires your work? How did you start out? Is there any advice you've learned throughout your career that you feel is impactful and super helpful for any dreamers out there?

Thank you

[u/ButteryAwesome] [24 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Thanks for asking :). Right now, I'm actually focusing on several prototypes and personal independent projects, including one core gaming related project where I spend the bulk of my time.

I'm doing all of the development by myself and kinda pouring a lot of what I've learned over the years into it. It's unlikely to be something remotely fully, Sims like, that's just too huge an undertaking, I think, for an indie dev. But I'm definitely combining the genres that I've worked on and that I enjoy into something quirky and interesting... to me anyhow :).

It includes elements and vibes that you're familiar with from The Sims and adjacent games like Rim World and Stardew and Don't Starve things like that. But I think there'll be a lot of elements that might feel out of place on the surface to most people, that I'm going to try to to make sing together. Kinda going for a chocolate in my peanut butter sorta thing :).

I don't know that this crowd will be all in for it, but I'll be posting devlog videos starting soon (mixed in with the Sims ramblings) and hopefully playable prototypes on my site if anyone wants to follow along.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [24 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Oh geez. People who know me know I can talk for an hour on how I got started and kind of what inspires me. It's pretty broad. And I started coding and designing little games when I was 11 years old, on the Apple two and the Commodore 64 so everything probably doesn't map directly to what you're going through in this particular time :).

But I would say what inspires my work is honestly communities like this. I love people deeply enjoying something that wouldn't exist if I hadn't been part of creating it. I love making things that people remember fondly or maybe are even still playing years and years later.

I started out by I guess really just loving games, old school arcade games for me, and by wanting to see if I could create something similar. I think the fact that indie games and retro gaming has had such a resurgence over the last decade or so, it's sort of reset that bar for people getting started out. Not that indie games aren't amazing in their own right, just that they don't seem as out of reach as an Assassin's Creed or a God of War.

Specifically, I created a game on my own while working my day job at Microsoft that I then used as my resume to get a job in the industry. A path that I think is still pretty common today, although often I think people undervalue the fact that the work you do on your own is your best resume when you don't have a track record of professional work.

As for advice, one of the things that I often say, and I don't know that this holds for everyone, and I don't even know that it's it's the best advice, but it's worked for me, and it's the advice that I gave to and the path that a lot of the designers that I've worked with have followed effectively.

And that was to not overly focus on one thing. You may love game design or animation, or you may love drawing and concepting, but force yourself to dig in below the surface of other disciplines. Program something. You don't have to be a master programmer. Your goal doesn't have to be a technical director, and you don't have to be remotely that experienced or skilled or knowledgeable, but just understand it. Have done it. For real, not just watched a youtube video.

And I think that's true for other things. Animate something, model something, edit audio, compose some music. Just try it all. And I bet you're going to find one or two, maybe more, things that you're also interested in, and then go deeper on those. You don't have to be a rockstar at all of them. I compose some seriously sub-mediocre music :). You don't have to be a jack of all trades, but I think that there's huge value in this industry at being a jack of more than one trade.

I know some career blogs, or whatever you want to call em, will say, that's not what AAA wants anymore. They want people who can sit in a chair and do the job that they're given efficiently. And there's some truth to that. But even the places that are posting jobs like that would rather hire somebody who is more general purpose so that when the game's focus changes or the game gets canceled and they're starting over with an entirely different game. They want people who have demonstrated their flexibility, their mental agility.

At least those are the people I've always looked for. I want a team of those magic people.

[u/Bus_Stop_Graffiti] [14 pts] [May 8, 2025]
When starting the development of The Sims 3, what was the very first system/function of the game that was focused on and made it to the first prototypes and how did this shape the rest of the development?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [30 pts] [May 11, 2025]
That's an easy one... the open world, and how we could get 100 Sims (I think 160 was our original target) in the world, existing, doing *anything*, and then simulating in the world simultaneously without the whole thing just falling over. That included the LOD system so that you could have those hundred Sims on screen at the same time if necessary. Probably a close second and third were the material customization and the usage of C# as the scripting language. Those were also core to the vision for the foundation that we wanted to build this new experience on.

Those were largely tech prototypes, but almost all of our designs had to start with "how will it work in a big seamless world with hundreds of sims". Transportation ("How can you travel across the map? We need cars? Do I need a garage? What if I walk bit by bit across town? Do I have to walk back because I left my car at home?")... How can I keep from losing my Sims?... Do I need to account for my commute time when leaving for work?.. those sorts of things.

The crazy customization didn't affect design all that much, but it fundamentally complicated a lot of engineering work that now had to account for its unique performance characteristics. And it most definitely complicated asset creation. Sims 3 artists (including my wife who was the lead for object art :)) had to look at everything very very differently than in previous games. Rather than mapping a painted texture to shirt with a painted on pocket and sleeves, they now had to think carefully about how that shirt would be cut and sown. They were effectively creating a sowing pattern that would then be overlaid on a player-chosen print (like a pattern over fabric) and then remapped onto the shirt geometry. It's a very alien way for artists to work and difficult to get your head around. If you didn't do that, things like pockets or sleeves wouldn't look like real clothing, cushions on sofas wouldn't look at all like real cushions, etc. When it clicked though, it let us do incredible things that looked great and gave players that ridiculous creative freedom.

And lastly, the usage of C# heavily affected development in that it allowed us to do certain things much much more cheaply (creatively, not necessarily performance) than in Sims 1 and 2 and it gave our designers and "object engineers" (the team members creating objects, socials, etc.) the flexibility to prototype, often to a near shippable quality, almost anything really quickly.

That also allowed for way more of what I call "long tail" designs. A **long tail design** is a design that very few players may ever see or care about, but which the players that do experience it will appreciate. They can make a game feel much larger than it is because you have the feeling that even years later, you might discover something new. Every corner could be hiding something magical or just plain silly... often more magical and silly because you can't believe it's actually there at all.

Those designs are normally the first to get cut because the cost/benefit just isn't there or is difficult to measure. But the ease with which the new foundation allowed for certain content to be created meant that a ton of those long tail features and quirky fun edge cases could be slipped in almost for free. That in turn was what allowed them to exist at all.

[u/HouseUnstoppable] [14 pts] [May 8, 2025]
From what I can see, the Sims 3 runs on a heavily upgraded Sims 2 engine right? Was it difficult taking that and making it go from the single lots to an open world?

What's your favorite expansion?

Was is ever intended for the game to launch with more than one world, before Sunset Valley? Or was Sunset Valley always meant to be the big one?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [32 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I can see why people might think that, given that some key aspects of the game, like interactions on objects, object placement, rendering houses, build mode fundamentals, etc. could have been done in Sims 2, at least on the surface. But Sims 3 was an entirely new engine, from the ground up. Very ground up to the point that, we started with a green square and 100 instances of the same sim standing there in that field as a test. Everything from the core of the rendering to the language everything is scripted in to customization and the entire simulation are brand new. The requirements were just too different between Sims 3 and Sims 2.

Sim 2 was built on much of the core of Sims 1 however. The rendering, animation, build mode and whatnot were all new as they were much more sophisticated and properly 3D. But the simulation, scripting system, etc. were evolutions of the original game. Sims 4 is also an entirely different engine than any of the others... again, due to wildly different requirements, at least at the start of development.

As for my favorite expansions, I suspect my reasons for choosing a favorite are probably different than most people's, but I'd have to say World Adventures is my favorite Sims 3 expansion because it was first, and it was this realization of, I think, the promise of the new architecture and flexibility in the game systems and the engine. I also love it because I didn't make it :). I was proud of the team and excited to see what they could do with what we'd built. Subsequent packs went even further, but that was the one that made it clear that this was gonna work.

And then for Sims 4, I'm biased, because I worked on a few of them, but not all of them. But I would have to say Pets, which is an easy one for me. In this case, it's because the approach that we took to that expansion pack felt really, really thoughtful and more broadly personal. I'm an animal person (cats, dogs, parrot, sometimes tadpoles...) as are much of the team, and we really did try to step back and not just create functional pets that did some pet things we could check off a list. We really looked at how pets become part of a family and how they change your life. What is it that that pets do to a household, what do they contribute mechanically, but also just kind of organically. How do they change the way you experience life?

And lastly, I confess I couldn't initially recall if we ever planned multiple worlds at launch. If we did plan that, we scaled it back so very very really really early that I blocked it out entirely :). In fact, according to a friend who was directing the engineering, World Adventures was extra difficult due to assumptions in the code that there would only be a single world. Properly supporting multiple worlds was part of what made that first pack particularly difficult.

[u/HouseUnstoppable] [8 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Fascinating. Thank you.

[u/Shihandono] [13 pts] [May 8, 2025]

Why did you make "Into the future"?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [29 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I didn’t :).

I *can* say that there’s always a contingent of the team, particularly designers, that wants to make a "sci-fi pack". Usually we deem that too odd or niche to prioritize ahead of almost "necessary" things like pets, richer dating, etc. so if a sci-fi pack eventually makes it to the top, it’s pretty much always very late in the game’s lifecycle.

[u/Shihandono] [7 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Thank you for your answer.

[u/v-orchid] [13 pts] [May 8, 2025]
How fun was creating World Adventures?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [26 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I was no longer at Maxis when that was developed, but I hear from friends who were still there that it wasn’t particularly enjoyable over all. Not that the concept and the content wasn’t loved and wonderful, but they were under such a tight timeline to get it out that it was a bit of a slog. It was also the first time really stretching those systems we built to support expansions, including multiple worlds and Sims between, so all of the bugs and missing features come crawling out.

[u/v-orchid] [6 pts] [May 11, 2025]
oh that’s surprising. the pack seems packed with love despite the bugs

[u/ButteryAwesome] [28 pts] [May 11, 2025]
An additional reply from one of my friends and designers from Sims 3 and World Adventures, Eric HW (after he saw my initial response :))...

>So yeah, while technically it might have been a bit of fitting a square peg into a round hole, it was one of my favorite products to have ever worked on. I’d be surprised if Juan and Ray didn’t agree as well. We all got to do level design, making puzzles, secrets, traps, and other cool stuff. I feel like the designers were almost all competing to see who could make the neatest and weirdest tombs to explore. Ray definitely took the cake with the craziest final encounters - the mummy fight. I was particularly proud myself of the Abu Simbel Tomb and the puzzles using the eye of horus, which let you place one anywhere, then teleport to it with the other one.There was a whole quest system as well, which while awkward to implement, was also completely new for the Sims. it was neat to try to interweave stories (via quests through not just a single world, but all three to varying extents (I believe Juan did most of that).
We were tired yes, but also invigorated to have released such a great game. I remember sitting on the balcony brainstorming with Matt right before he left, riffing on fire traps in an egyptian tomb and how cool that would be in the Sims. Then I remember grabbing a Sims 3 build and throwing together a quick "pyramid" using the standard level design to see what it would feel like to navigate such a space, and it felt like it worked perfectly.

Given that both those guys are in the same email thread with me right now, that probably gives a pretty clear picture :).

[u/v-orchid] [4 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Thank you so very much!

[u/LizaKhajiit] [11 pts] [May 9, 2025]
Hi Matt! Mike Sellers, who was a lead designer on The Sims 2 early in development, once talked about a feature that didn't make it into the final game: an [adaptive environment system
](https://www.quora.com/What-were-the-design-goals-for-The-Sims-2/answer/Mike-Sellers?ch=15&oid=3732317&share=d390b5d7&srid=uj0Mv&target_type=answer)
that would change the lighting, music, and camera angles based on the kinds of objects the player placed - like shifting the tone toward horror or romance depending on your decor. He said it was his favorite removed feature.

Do you remember this system? I'd love to hear more about how it was supposed to work, how far it got in development, and why it was ultimately dropped.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [19 pts] [May 12, 2025]
That's really interesting. I don't know that Mike and I ever overlapped. Although, when I came on as the technical director, initially on Sims 2, the game barely existed as a game. It was kind of a green screen with some gray boxes and really, really early, build mode largely brought over from Sims one. But the 3D engine was propped up, and the Sims 1 simulator and the Sims 1 tool chain for scripting objects and whatnot, was functional... very, very buggy but technically functional.

As to that specific feature, I wasn't there when it was being discussed. That must have been extremely early in development, and I never saw a design for it. I think I heard it mentioned briefly in a conversation. The description on that Quora page sounds roughly like what I heard mentioned. The idea was basically to analyze various contextual elements moment to moment (objects, placement, sims and sim state, current interaction, etc.) and then procedurally place cameras and lights, trigger music and SFX, etc. to create a more cinematic moment that (hopefully) amplified and elevated the moment.

Personally, I wouldn't have incorporated that design, and in the end we didn't. I would see that as having similar issues to emotions in Sims 4 in that it over prescribes a narrative. I got into the emotions design a bit in an earlier answer and why that seems cool on the surface but largely goes against what makes The Sims special. I could see providing those same tools to builders or puppeteers though, so that they could apply them to a room, or even apply them to a sim, so that when they did a certain social that always happened. I think that could be really funny, and it would allow players to create some compelling moments and some very strange ones :).

But similar to the emotion discussion, I think that runs the same risk. Sometimes you'll get it right, and it'll be almost like a magical easter egg that the game noticed all clever like and really embraced and amplified what you were trying to do. But more often

than not, you’re likely to be wrong. And that means you might be trying to have a romantic moment, and your Sims are kissing for the first time, and suddenly it starts playing horror music and lights everything demonic red, because there’s a Sim who hates you standing in your front yard, but you didn’t even see them.

Obviously, you can imagine a system that’s perfect, but you also can imagine that it likely rarely would be and in general I would consider those violations of players’ mental models to be more negatively impactful than the benefit that you might get from occasionally correctly guessing their intent. Moreover, you’d need to do a crazy number of them or players would get tired of them really quickly, particularly in an "evergreen game" like The Sims.

The little "life moment" cinematics in Sims 2 (e.g. first kiss, giving birth, etc) for example, already bug people, and even though those were intended to be extremely low frequency and were quite well done, they still get old fast.

But that’s just my take. Design is subjective :).

[u/LizaKhajiit] [5 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Interestingly, Will Wright talked about a similar system at GDC 2001. The talk is called "[Will Wright’s Design Plunder](https://youtu.be/c91IWh4agzU)", starting at the 58:07.

A transcription of this part of the talk is available on The Cutting Room Floor site, in the [sub-page about The Sims 2 that covers this system](https://tcrf.net/The_Sims_2_(Windows)/Story_Recognition_Mode).

[u/[deleted]] [2 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Honestly, to this day, Sims 2 cutscenes are my favorite feature!

[u/DarkVoidG] [37 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Are there any plans to bring back a remastered, modernized version of The Sims 3, or otherwise another "open world experience" iteration in new Sims games?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [23 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I can’t really speak to that as I haven’t worked at Maxis for several years, but I’d be surprised. There’s always some tradeoff between streaming worlds and fidelity, and the nature of the Sims, particularly the fine grained runtime customization, can make that tradeoff more extreme. Not impossible though. I think the visual fidelity of Sims 4, regardless of whether you agree with the aesthetic choices, is quite high and difficult to back away from.

[u/MyForgedHeroes] [12 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Huge fan of the Landgraabs here! Some questions about them :
- How the Landgraabs from The Sims 2 Open for Business and Landgraabs from The Sims 3 are connected together?

- Malcolm, Dudley and Mimi are mentionned a few times in The Sims 2. Does these specific members were planned to be added in this game as playable or NPCs? Why didn’t they made the

cut?

Thank you!

[u/sosteph] [20 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Why step away from the customization of sims clothing and all items?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [27 pts] [May 11, 2025]
With the caveat that, other than a month or two of some very preliminary planning for Sims 4, I was not involved in the development of the base game... I'm very aware of its development history.

But the main reason from my understanding is that that level of customization, that sort of layers and layers and layers of every material on every object that could be comprised of any print with multiple regions with custom colors for every region... All of that was extremely difficult to to implement and extremely difficult to make performant (and it arguably still isn't always). So that capability was baked into the very core of the engine from the beginning. It was actually something I'd wanted to do on Sims 2, and when we started Sims 3 from scratch, I finally had a chance. So it's baked into the "soul" of that engine.

When they went to make Sims 4, it was being designed initially as an MMO... a massively multiplayer client/sever sorta joint. And those often rely very heavily on optimizing streaming and compression and lots of things to make the world function properly at that scale without load screens. And as a result, MMOs generally have very different constraints and limitations than traditional "load-screen" games.

And with that many players just running around with individually customized Sims in their pink and purple paisley slacks all willy nilly, and everything being unique, it really just couldn't have been done practically in that world. Then when the Sims 4 pivoted back to a a single player experience that customization hadn't been baked into the core of the engine, and there was no practical way to bring it back in time. Incidentally, we did largely pull this off many years later in Titan at Blizzard (before it pivoted to Overwatch). Unironically, Bruce Wilkie also worked on that :).

That's my understanding. It's possible there were some design disagreements as well. There was always a contingent that thought being able to change the materials on an object kind of screwed with the gameplay mechanic of nice objects satisfying motives more efficiently and being more expensive, and lame objects being less efficient, cheaper, and more ugly. That crazy Sims 3 level of customization basically decoupled the aesthetic from the function, and I know there were some people who didn't care for that. That was part of the reason we didn't do it in Sims 2, but I don't believe that's the reason that it was removed between Sims 3 and 4.

[u/SuccessfulPanda211] [18 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Is there any possibility a 64 bit version of the sims 3 will ever be released for windows? It would be so nice to play it without it crashing due to memory issues.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [23 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I'm not familiar with the exact issues (if any other Sims 3 devs see this, maybe they can chime in), but at this point, I'd be extremely surprised. The code is quite old and effectively a dead codebase. There are almost certainly gnarly complications from such a switch to that code.

That said, as someone who keeps 20 year old prototypes running solely for my amusement, I'd love to have a more future proof Sims 3 that could be around for another 20.

[u/SuccessfulPanda211] [3 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Thanks for answering this! Would it be ok for me to ask you one more question? I forgot about it until now. It's regarding why teen sims who are grounded get in trouble for trying to go to school, but then also get in more trouble for not going to school. Is this a feature that was coded intentionally or was it a coding oversight that was never corrected?

Thank you for your time!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [6 pts] [May 12, 2025]
I wasn't actually there for Generations, so I can't speak to it directly. it definitely doesn't sound intentional. I'd guess that was just a specific case that wasn't thought of and got missed during testing. I can imagine someone thinking that letting teens off the lot for school would defeat the purpose of grounding and be too hard to control... which if implemented incorrectly could lead to that bug.

Although thinking about it, teens being able to screw around on the way to and from school without consequences even when they're grounded is cool stories.

[u/iamhappytobealive] [2 pts] [May 8, 2025]
this rly needs to be answered.

[u/bhocobhipbookie] [19 pts] [May 8, 2025]
First of all, thank you for any and all contributions you've made to the sims 3 (my favourite game).

Secondly, I would like to ask these following questions:

1. How much creative freedom is given to the Dev team, in relation to, creating The Sims? Many fans assert that lacking gameplay features should be blamed on EA. Is that a fair assumption to make? Can the dev team only make what EA asks of them like this comment suggests ([Here](https://www.reddit.com/r/thesims/comments/112z65p/comment/j8q39x6/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=mweb3x&utm_name=mweb3xcss&utm_term=1&utm_content=share_button))? Or is the amount of interference EA exerts exaggerated?

2. What was the reasoning behind many gameplay features in the sims 3 being stripped from the release of The Sims 4 basegame? (I.e. The lack of pools, toddlers, family tree, no cars, no basements, burglars [etc](https://www.reddit.com/r/Games/comments/2djgv9/comment/cjq246u/?utm_source=share&utm_

medium=mweb3x&utm_name=mweb3xcss&utm_term=1&utm_content=share_button).)
Many believe this was to appeal to lower end PCs. Is that true ?

3. Many players have speculated that, The Sims 4 was initially created to be an online multiplayer game which quickly changed to a single player game months before release ; This caused "spaghetti" code, making it difficult for new/innovative features to be added onto an alleged weak foundation and also causes "game breaking" bugs. How true is this assumption, If at all? Is this a myth?

4. How difficult is it/ How long does it take to add new animations and game-play mechanics ? Were you/ the team given enough time ? Did this amount of time decrease from Sims 2, to Sims 3 and eventually The Sims 4?
Is it fair to say that, the introduction of Game packs and kits further reduced any amount of time given?

5. What was the reasoning for world sizes decreasing from The Sims 3 to 4? Was this also for the benefit of lower end PCs?

6. One of my favourite things about The sims 3 was the amount of content in one expansion pack. Why are so many features that were in one Sims 3 expansion pack, now split into multiple different DLC in The Sims 4?

I realise that a lot of my questions involve The sims 4 and you may not be able to answer all of them (for whatever reason) ; I just want to gain a better understanding of differences between The Sims 3 and 4. Thank you in advance!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [16 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Questions... questions... :)

1. I think that’s maybe a common misconception, or at least the extreme degree that I think some people imagine it happens. The team generally has quite a bit of creative freedom. Part of that I think is due to The Sims being such a uniquely weird franchise that most people don’t understand it but don’t want to screw it up :). Where EA does impact what makes it into the game is resource and time constraints. It’s EA’s money, so that’s fair. They get to decide how much to commit to this weird successful game. It’s up to the team(s) to then make the most of what they get and to earn the right to ask for more. There will always be a some practical limit to what can be spent (time and money) on a game, although we can always argue The Sims deserves more. I would say that in my experience, Sims 3 was given the widest berth. We were allowed to break pretty much everything and try pretty much anything.

2. I mentioned it a bit elsewhere in the thread, but the issue was fundamentally that Sims 4 was originally intended to be very different MMO experience. That would have necessitated a significantly different technical architecture, and also would have required significant changes to core gameplay systems that had been in The Sims across three entire iterations. A great deal of effort was put into that client/server MMO experience.

I don’t know exactly how long that went on, but at some point, there was a realization that

this, was not going to work in that form (possibly related to the SimCity 2013 debacle), and they had to pivot and retool to ship a more traditional single player experience. But at that point, they had invested so much time, they had to both repurpose the old architecture for something it wasn't originally intended to do, and they had to redesign the game, albeit into something everyone was more familiar with. Given that incredible burden and the now shortened timelines, things had to be aggressively scoped.

3. (See above) I wasn't around for the Sims 4 base game implementation, but knowing the team, I wouldn't presume bad code as much as being in a position where they needed to build one game on the foundation of a different game altogether. That's a crazy difficult thing to do and can make some previously easy things nearly impossible to do cleanly.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [18 pts] [May 11, 2025]
4. The amount of time needed to create content has varied wildly across versions. Often it's less that it takes more or less time overall and more a redistribution between things. Sims 3 customization drove up the cost of objects and clothing significantly, while the efforts to make locomotion more fluid in SIms 4 radically increased the time to add new forms of locomotion (e.g. toddlers progressing from crawling to wobbling to walking). Game systems and mechanics were much much easier to implement in Sims 3 due to the flexibility and richness of the C# based scripting, but each game had it's localized burdens.

Re: GPs/SPs "stealing time" from other packs, I wouldn't generally say that's true. There's a general formula at this point on Sims 4 for how much time and resources can be committed to a given pack (generally based directly on whether it's an EP/GP/SP). Beyond that though, it really comes down to good design. It's on the team, given the constraints they're given to design an experience that feels complete and "worth it" for the players. The Sims 4 team(s) in particular had/have a very polished pipeline for concepting, designing, scoping, implementing and tuning packs (one pipeline each for EPs, GPs, and SPs actually). If a pack feels smaller than usual, it more often means something went wrong along the way than time was squeezed.

5. Not as I understood it, but Sims 3 was pushing it for sure :). As I understand it, this was primarily a side effect of 2 and 3 above. It's possible there was some creative angle to that decision, but I'm not aware of any. Houses feeling isolated and lonely was never something anyone wanted.

6. It felt to me that it's a way to mitigate risk while also maintaining a strong "heartbeat" for the game. If you spend less resources on each pack and release them faster, you can afford for the odd pack to be less well received, both financially and from a player sentiment perspective. If you didn't like that one, there'll be another one in a couple of months that you'll probably like. Things like SPs also let us meet the needs of some player types (e.g. builders), with new items and themes without them having to wait for all of the gameplay and other bits in a big EP.

That does still preclude some really big ideas that won't even fit in the scope of a Sims 4 EP though.

I’m sure some of those answers aren’t particularly inspiring :), but hopefully it gives a better picture of the differences between the two iterations.

[u/bhocobhipbookie] [4 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Thank you so much for the detailed response and taking time out of your day to answer. This has definitely cleared up some misconceptions

I appreciate having a better understanding of what goes on from the perspective of the sims team :)

[u/blue_ptashka] [9 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Always been curious if the adult-themed interactions (getting a "and there’s a picture with the letter... oh!", etc) were snuck in or was everyone aware of them? I didn’t understand them as a kid, and when I returned to the game years later, I was very surprised

Also, how did the team approach Easter eggs - were they planned for every EP?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [14 pts] [May 11, 2025]
(see above) I don’t recall anyone sneaking anything in. The only trivial things that someone could change without needing art, animations, etc or going through a code review (and hence requiring an accomplice :)) would maybe be text. And all text goes through localization, so someone would catch it. The Sims team also generally is full of people who are really passionate and reverent about The Sims. No one wants to screw it up just to get their 15 minutes :)

Those Pixar-like lightly suggestive bits were someone being funny and pushing it a bit.

Easter eggs aren’t really planned, but particularly on Sims 4 with a more disciplined development structure, they would need to be factored in to planning pretty early or slipped in when there ends up with a bit of extra time at the end of development, although that would then also be planned carefully. Sims 3 (and to a lesser degree Sims 2) had more of that "I had this silly idea and put it in last night. Oh that’s awesome! Let’s ship it." going on.

People that find me frustrating often (justifiably) cite exactly that :)

[u/casey4190] [8 pts] [May 9, 2025]
Did the modding community impact the development of the game in any way?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [8 pts] [Jul 21, 2025]
Oh definitely. The modding community had a significant impact on the way we thought about a lot of features. I can think of several examples where the consideration of the health of the modern community and all of that were significant factors in the design.

For example some of the communally viral ways that people played sims 2, like legacy challenges and similar "long play" challenges were always front of mind during Sims 3 development, as both from a technical perspective and a design perspective, we needed to make sure that everything stayed as stable as possible when played that way. We wanted the

game to keep running as well as possible when you've played for 20 generations, and we also needed the game systems and simulation to continue to function that far down the line. When things simulate and systems run for long timelines, they often accumulate small (rounding)errors, imbalances, multiplicative compounding (see Sim genetics :)), etc.

In many cases in and out of The Sims, designs don't have to deal with those issues and can be much simpler for it. Often that's due to most systems having natural "reset points" like levels, rounds, runs, matches, etc. that prevent most systems from accumulating state. Thanks to legacy challenges, we didn't have that luxury :).

Another example might be the extensive customization of objects... materials, prints, colors and all of that. That was a something I was very passionate about (since early Sims 2). I wanted the capability as a service/present to custom content creators, as they clearly love that sort of customization, and this felt like a crazy enabler for them. But on the other hand, I had a real concern that this could gut the modding/custom content community. So much custom content, at least superficially, was retextures and recolors, and making it trivial might devalue that content to the point that no one bother to share it. That simpler custom content creation also served sort of as an "on ramp" for creators to more sophisticated custom content, and building it all into the base game could potentially remove the motivation to step into that broader custom content world.

In the end we decided that it was important enough and sort of transformative enough for the franchise that we were willing to take that risk with the hope being that the community would step up or step into other types of customization. And they clearly did. :)

And I'd also consider the use of C# as the scripting language in Sims 3 (used for all of the systems, objects, etc.) to be heavily influenced by the modding community. The primary reason for using it was to enable modders to do much much more than they could in previous games and to make it actually "professional" and properly supported. Imagining what crazy things future Sims 3 modders would want to do (based on the Sims 2 mods at the time) was key to designing the whole environment.

In the end, we weren't able to ship it to players (reasons and longer discussion elsewhere in this thread), but the crazy depth and breadth of content in Sims 3 is a direct result of using C# for scripting and the flexibility that gave us... and that was motivated by the modders (even if they never got to unwrap their present).

[u/[deleted]] [8 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Do you think it's possible we get a 64 bit version of The Sims 3 in the near future?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [13 pts] [May 11, 2025]
(see above) Short version... not 100% impossible

[u/[deleted]] [7 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Emotions, the selling point of The Sims 4, feel more realistic in The Sims 2 and 3. The way Sims 4 presents it feels very much like it was mainly marketed for kids. As grown up player it feels dumb to have these labels, because emotions are more complex than "sad", "happy" etc. Your thoughts on that mechanic?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [29 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I wasn't there for that design or development, so I can't speak to the thinking at the time. But I don't personally like them much. There are times where they align perfectly with what the player expects, and in those moments they're reaffirming/reenforcing the player's belief... which they already had.

But one of the magic tricks in The Sims is ambiguity (see Simlish). By being thoughtfully ambiguous (not the same as random), you leave room for the player to project onto the Sims. And they often project much more nuance and depth than is really being simulated. The game looks like it's magic, and players really connect and have a great time

When you explicitly *state* something (e.g. "This Sim is Angry"), you drastically shrink that creative space for the player. In my head that same Sim stomping their feet could be frustrated, exasperated, distraught, or maybe yeah just angry. In the worst case though, you explicitly contradict the story the player has in their head... record scratch and the magic evaporates.

[u/[deleted]] [7 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Whose idea was it to add the dick-pic in the mail feature?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [20 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Hahaha! I don't recall who specifically added that, but there's always been a little bit of an undercurrent of a sort of subversiveness in the Sims. And there's a latent desire to insert those kind of Pixar-like references that wouldn't really be offensive or wouldn't even be picked up on by a younger audience, or maybe even a just a more sensitive audience, but then the players who notice it giggle a little bit, and that makes us happy :).

There aren't very many, because it's certainly not what we wanted the vibe of the game to be at all, but it gives a the game a bit more texture and character.

P.S.: No one said it was a dick pic. That's all coming from you, man :)

[u/MiNombreEsLucid] [9 pts] [May 8, 2025]
If you were given full creative control to make a brand new Sims game (does not necessarily have to be The Sims 5) what elements would you use?

Do you have a favorite Sim from any game and if so, who is it?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [6 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
That's a great question. Probably too big to answer entirely here, but I can ramble through kind of a high level and maybe a few specifics.

During the development of Sims 3, I sort of half jokingly referred to the base game as the "operating system"... basically Windows. And the content that we ship with the base game is basically Minesweeper and Solitaire and Notepad. And the expansion packs are first party applications like Excel and Word that are intended to show the rest of the app makers the

breadth and power of the "OS" and to serve as examples of "what good looks like" on the platform for developers so that their apps are awesome too.

That’s not particularly creatively inspiring :), but what I was trying to get across was that the base game should be this foundational collection of functionality (including plenty that we might not even use in the base game) with APIs that modders and the community can access just like the Maxis devs can. Then we build interesting experiences on top of that. Some of those experiences could be "plug-ins" or extensions to the core game in the same way you have extensions to your operating system. Or they could be entirely new experiences, self-contained like an application that takes advantage of and is made more consistent and accessible and approachable because it relies heavily on the underlying shared OS... on that foundation.

So that’s a very geeky way to think of it, but what that would mean for something like Sims 5 is that I would want to start from that vision... that we’re building this foundation that any type of content can be created on top of and that anyone can create for... the community or Maxis. Then we build the entire game on top of that "platform" and open everything to players to create their content... from wallpaper to full community-made EPs.

I’m assuming the world would be seamless and potentially much larger and the depth and breadth of most systems projected forward, and things that (I think) were solid ideas but which didn’t reach their potential such as story progression would be reimagined to be more rich and robust.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [5 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
As for specific features, I can’t say I’ve fully prototyped and designed any at this point, but there are several big aspects of the game that I’d love to explore more deeply:

Relationships and social interaction \- We did many prototypes early in Sims 3 development of more nuanced or "elevated" socialization, but we never found the sweet spot. My goal was/would be to find a level of player control that felt more like directing the conversation than choosing every individual social (although I’m assuming there’d still be the ability for players to queue explicit actions as well). You could think of it as social LOD (level of detail) where the player can choose how engaged and micro-managy they want to be in a given situation. Hosting a party? Set "auto-social(TM)" to "friendly chit chat" (tries to increase friend relationships with everyone and avoid conflict). Having your first kiss? Do everything manually, interaction by interaction.

Sims’ memories and long term behaviors \- I’d really love to go a little crazy with this. One of the things that makes Sims feel "dumb" is that they don’t seem to carry around much of what they experienced like *we* all do. The things that happen to them don’t really affect who they are beyond superficial interaction modifications (generally). I don’t know for sure what form that might take, but imagine Sims accumulating experiences as little internalized memories that can then influence small things or compound into larger changes in behavior and capability. Or as mentioned elsewhere in this thread, maybe they just write books and paint paintings and write songs about the things that they’ve experienced. The key would be finding a balance between academic designer "smartness" and having a meaningful impact on the play experience that players can appreciate..

Routines and Roles \- The downside of the approach we take to simulating Sims is that they are notoriously difficult to script or to force into a particular role or sequence of behaviors. I don’t know what form this would take, although we did some prototyping on Sims 3. But integrating some concept of Sims having a preferred "flow" or series of goals that they do, say, when they wake up or when they shop at a store or eat at a restaurant into the foundation or the core behavior of a Sim is, I think, really important. It’s something we always end up wanting relatively early in development or in the first expansion pack and it’s something that generally gets bolted on late, fights with the simulation and really never works. Building routines/roles into the core from the start would open tons of new possibilities.

Item customization \- This needs to be "reinvented" with more modern hardware capabilities, but I think I’d also focus on how to make that level of customization much more accessible to more people. That might take the form of more thoughtful organic assistance (think an AI designer who "yes and"s your choices and always suggests something amazing for the things you haven’t hand picked), but it would definitely involve significant UI exploration as well.

Time compression \- This one’s a little vague, but I’d really like to explore ways to shrink the boring bits (sleeping, walking/driving, skill building, etc) and generally minimize the need to watch or direct mundane activities and provide more detail/control in moments that really matter. The "skip to end of interaction" was a baby step experiment (which worked better in the prototype :)), but I think we could do something really innovative that didn’t take any agency away from the player.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [6 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
And one random bit for fun...

Relationship with the player \- Not the same scale as the others, but something we toyed with in both Sims 2 and Sims 3 was the concept of the player themselves being a concept in the game world (most likely optionally). In the most direct form, that might mean that the player is another "Sim" from a relationship standpoint (albeit an invisible one), but in-game Sims would build relationships with the player based on what the player does to/for them and how their lives are turning out. In turn, a Sim’s relationship with the player could (potentially) modulate anything in the game. It could be frustrating things like Sims ignoring you, or even undermining your goals. But it could also mean that Sims perform better when you direct them or even unlocking higher level controls like "goal setting" for Sims that have a good relationship with the player. Probably silly, but I want a play with it :).

I definitely also have thoughts on less traditional paths forward for he core Sims franchise, but that’s another thread :)

[u/ButteryAwesome] [9 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
And depending on your criteria, my favorite Sim would have to be Goopy Gilscarbo from Sims 2. He’s not my favorite because he’s an awesome, attractive, lovable Sim (obviously). He’s my favorite because of how he came to be. The townies in Sims 2 (random Sims that wander by

your house and can form relationships but who don’t live in houses in the neighborhood) are expensive to generate. So we couldn’t just generate all of the townies in the "townie pool" at runtime when you launch the game. What we did instead was that we generated them once in-game on someone’s machine just running the Sims 2 build, and then we saved them out. Then when you install the game you get the same set of townies in that pool that everyone else does. However, we (Maxis) didn’t explicitly make them, and it’s possible we didn’t even really look at them closely.

We definitely didn’t hand edit them in most cases. So that outfit, the way he looks, his personality, everything else, those were just randomly generated. I think most people know that his name is a random combination of first/last names of team members (Goopy Rossi and Gabe Gilscarbo in his case), but just the combination of those particularly unique names and the alliteration is just funny in its own right? And the fact that he was such a horrible character who was also a romance SIM was extra hilarious.

So he’s my favorite Sim because he was completely randomly generated, but because he was consistent for everyone, he became a "shared experience" for players and the community turned him into a thing that people still talk about now.

And all of that makes me smile :)

[u/MiNombreEsLucid] [4 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
Thank you for doubling back and answering my question. Love your answers.

[u/Fluffle-floo] [9 pts] [May 8, 2025]
This is really cool of you!

Which sims expansion was your favorite? In both sims 2 and sims 3!

Have you ever played a sims challenge? Like legacy or rags to riches!

[u/DeneralVisease] [9 pts] [May 9, 2025]
Thank you for everything. :)

[u/RightInThere71] [7 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Why did EA switch from disk to download in the middle of the Sims3? Was there any special reason?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [9 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Assuming you mean during the DLC Age since Sims 3 shipped on disc originally... I wasn’t there, but generally that happens to save the manufacturing cost of discs, boxes, shipping etc. as a game ages. It can also make for a better initial experience sometimes as you don’t start by patching a year old disc copy. I don’t actually know if those were factors for them though.

[u/whatanabsolutefrog] [7 pts] [May 8, 2025]
How do you feel about llamas?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [5 pts] [Jul 21, 2025]
I love both animals and Napoleon Dynamite, but I don't think I'd want a llama as a pet. That said, I was an old school Maxis fanboy and figuring where the llama references were in each new Sim* game they released is a fond memory. At this point, any llama, real or reference, makes me smile.

[u/RavenRegime] [7 pts] [May 10, 2025]
1. I'm curious about the influences even at the most basic of concepts for some of the plotlines especially in regards to returning Sims 1 sims and their descendants., I'm most curious for example the design decisions for connecting sims like Brandi Broke to the Newbies.

2. I notice that at base Sims 2 was more... for lack of better wording mature than Sims 1 like yes sure we got the cake dancers and the heart bed in later expansions of Sims 1 but I'm curious what the decisions behind that were? Like was it an aging with audience thing?

3. The most mysterious sim to me from a game design standpoint was Nina Caliente due to fact she seems just there. Like people have uncovered evidence of a proto Don and Dina but no proto Nina. And she feels kinda disconnected from the Bella plot especially if Dina moves in Mortimer a prompt to kick out Nina will display. She also does not seem to fit the romance sim aspect. Like she does not have multiple lovers.

The only point for her seems to be have Don be caught cheating but the cheating pseudo tutorial is Daniel in the same town. So the only gameplay teaching moment seems to be moving out which contradicts the idea of Dina and Nina wanting to both use the Goth money?

Was the intent for Nina to be a starter character that players could mess with then after they move her out?

[u/Sorry_Climate662] [6 pts] [May 8, 2025]
What was going on with the recreated Sims in The Sims 2? Was there any accidental deletion or were they intentionally deleted and recreated for some reason?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [12 pts] [May 11, 2025]
If I understand what you're referring to, that was frequently done to puppeteer family trees. We didn't have a mechanism, really for editing family trees, so it was part of that process, iirc, to create sims, build relationships, delete the sims, kill them off, whatever was necessary in order to manipulate the family tree to be what we wanted to tell a story without having to keep those sims around. I remember it being a huge pain, particularly for something so secondary, but we wanted to get it right, and making changes generally meant recreating and killing off all those Sims again (oh the humanity...)

But other than that, we could always roll back any significant mistake. We used professional source control and we could always get back previous versions of things if someone made a notable mistake. I don't remember anyone specifically deleting Sims accidentally though, certainly not often.

[u/LizaKhajiit] [6 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Hi Matt! First off, thank you for doing this AMA - it’s really appreciated.

What was the most stressful part of developing The Sims 2?

[u/ButteryAwesome] [11 pts] [Jul 21, 2025]
Of course! (although I *am* answering this several months later :))

There were several notably stressful bits in The Sims 2 development. For me personally, I was directing the engineering for the sequel to one of my favorite games at arguably my favorite game studio, and I desperately didn’t want to screw that up.

But as to the game itself, I’d say the most stressful part was probably how incredibly successful The Sims had already been. Some of the original team was working on Sims 2 and that helped bridge the gap, but Will wasn’t involved, and there was a pervasive sense that no one was really quite sure exactly what made it so successful. I used to joke that our "mission" on Sims 2 was "Don’t screw it up". That largely led to what I call a 3M design (3M = More More More) in which you mostly look at what worked in the previous version and just do a bunch more of it. There’s nothing inherently wrong with that, and it led to vastly expanded build tools, gorgeous visuals, tons more objects, teenagers, etc.

However, it also meant that as we were nearing the end of development, we realized that the core of the game loop felt eerily similar/identical to the original game. There was a bit of a panic at that realization and a worry that all a "pretty Sims 1" wouldn’t be enough to carry the franchise forward. That wasn’t a remotely accurate or fair assessment of what was there, but it stuck with someone, and we needed to propose a "fix" (not really quite how game development works :)). In the end, we promised that if we could get another 6 months (iirc), we could add "key new features that will more clearly differentiate Sims 2 from Sims 1".

In the end, they did give us the time, and those features turned out to be a bunch of extreme personality-based behaviors/interactions/socials and Wants and Fears. I don’t know that those transformed the experience (although wants and fears did give the Sims more depth and could make them feel "smarter"), but the extra time also let the team fix tons of bugs, optimize things, and to add a ton of smaller little bits that really made the game feel loved. And being trusted enough to be given time to "extend" and polish the game ended up being a positive thing for the team.

Plus... those heavy handed personality bits pointed the way towards personality traits in Sims 3, and Wants and Fears led to Dreams and Promises (both of which are some of my favorite systems).

[u/LizaKhajiit] [3 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
Thank you so much for your detailed answer - really appreciate you taking the time, even after all these weeks! :)

[u/HylianEevee] [6 pts] [May 9, 2025]
Sims 2 and 3 were a big part of my childhood! What were some of the weirdest traits that

got proposed or scrapped?
Also, do you know anything about some of the scrapped memories from Sims 2? I've documented some of them on TCRF and I'd really like to find out more!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [20 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I choose to assume they were *good* parts of your childhood and not traumatic :).

As for traits... for starters, here's the list of traits from the integrated "living world prototype" we created and play tested before production. I have a brief write up on my site, and I'll do a deep dive video sometime in the next couple of weeks. Not all of these are necessarily something we would ever ship and a few are named questionably, but there are a few that I know we didn't. They were often in opposing pairs, but that wasn't required.

Feel free to follow up comment and I can explain what the intent was behind some of the mystery ones.

Shy / Outgoing
Mean / Friendly
Sloppy / Neat
Playful / Serious
Lazy / Active
Slow Walker / Fast Walker
Selfless / Greedy
Genius / Airhead
Big Ego / Modest
Good / Evil
Loves Outdoors / Hates Outdoors
Sickly / High Immunity
Good Cook / Horrible Cook
Prefers Baths / Prefers Showers
Hates TV / Loves TV
Overtly Feminine / Overtly Masculine
Clumsy / Dexterous
Conversationalist / Quiet
Placid / Irate
Always Early / Always Late
Curious / Strong
Political
Workaholic
Romantic
Flirty
Artistic
Adventurous
Eccentric
Paranoid
Insane
Whiner

Crybaby
Mooch
Talks to Self
Leaves Toilet Seat Up
Close Talker
Cleptomaniac
Geek
Prankster
Spendthrift
Party Animal
Commitment Issues
Angry Worker
Fast Reader
Fidgety
Childish
Poser
Shallow
Green Thumb
Good Kisser
Funny
Shopaholic / Hates Shopping

[u/ButteryAwesome] [17 pts] [May 11, 2025]
And these last few concepts that mostly didn't materilize but which we really loved (these were Ray Mazza Specials iirc :)). They were treated like personality traits but could each have an "object" associated with them (e.g. "Favorite Color is Puce"... "In My Pocket is a yoyo") to make them more unique and special. But the idea was that they could be queried by any system in the game to modulate something interestingly just like regular atomic traits.

Favorite Color
Favorite Food
Favorite Object
Favorite Place
Favorite Music
Favorite Greeting
Favorite Sim Artist
Favorite Kind of TV
Favorite Exclamation
In My Pocket

[u/ButteryAwesome] [9 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Unfortunately, I don't personally recall how memories worked in Sims 2. Based on their nature, I have a strong feeling they piggy backed off of Wants and Fears which were added very late in development.

Underlying wants and fears was a database of events that a Sim could experience/achieve. Those obviously included much finer grained events than warranted a player visible "memory", but the Sims "remembered" all of them similarly, and I can't see any memories

that weren’t also want/fear triggers (hidden or visible).

[u/AlliHarri] [6 pts] [May 10, 2025]
We’ve noticed on this sub that so many people are still discovering new things in the Sims 3, even after all these years! I know it’s a long shot, but do you think there are any secrets we still haven’t discovered yet, or any hidden secrets under the surface that that you think we might not know about?

[u/Sad_Click5373] [7 pts] [May 11, 2025]
I really hope he answers this question. I have a feeling there’s a lot of undiscovered Easter eggs

[u/starship_turbulence] [6 pts] [May 11, 2025]
1. The Sims has a lot of shared DNA with SimCity - how much collaboration was there with the SimCity team?
2. While combing through the Sims 2 game files, fans have found a lot of discrepancies and oddities in the data of the base game neighborhoods (Pleasantview, Strangetown, Veronaville) compared to the later expansion neighborhoods, presumably because those base game neighborhoods were being created while the core game engine was still under development. Do you remember any bugs, data loss or weird stuff that occurred trying to build neighborhoods while the game itself was still coming together?
3. In Sims 1 and 2, there is essentially only one save "slot" for each neighborhood, so there’s no going back to an older save unless the player makes external backups. I’m curious whether this was a technical limitation or a conscious design choice, and how did the decision come about to switch to a more traditional save slot system in Sims 3 and 4?
4. Do you keep up with the Sims modding community at all, and if so are there any particular mods you’ve seen that have stood out or surprised you?
5. Do you have a favorite object in any of the Sims games?
6. Any thoughts on the release of InZOI, the death of Life By You, and other games coming up in the life sim space? What advice would you have for a team trying to create a new life sim from scratch?

Sorry that’s a lot of very specific questions haha, no pressure to answer them all! Thanks for sharing your insights with the communty.

[u/Middle-Paramedic3770] [5 pts] [May 11, 2025]
During the development of The Sims 2 and 3, what were the biggest design decisions you made with longevity and scalability in mind - and looking back, what would you have done differently to allow for even more creative freedom and customization for players and modders? If you could give one piece of advice to someone who dreams of creating their own life simulator - advice that could save them years of headaches - what would it be?

Edit: By the way, I loved your talk at GDC, it brought a lot of clarity and helped me redesign the logic behind the mechanics of The Sims 3 to the point of making it even more alive, reactive and charming. And I’m extremely grateful for sharing this knowledge with us.

[u/bvsveera] [5 pts] [May 12, 2025]

Hi Matt! Hopefully it isn’t too late to ask a question of my own.

Did you ever get a chance to meet, interact and/or work with Will Wright while you were at Maxis?

Thank you so much for taking the time to answer these questions, and more broadly for the work you and your team did. I received The Sims 2 University at a Pizza Hut as a kid, bought The Sims 3 on day one, and rediscovered it during the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020. While The Sims is not the game I play the most these days, it’s still the one that’s survived the longest in my games library, and will continue to do so.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [8 pts] [May 14, 2025]
Yes! I had a chance to meet or work with Will several times while I was at Maxis. By my second stint at Maxis though, Will was long gone from EA and doing his own thing.

Oddly, I actually had a chance to meet him first when I was working on FIFA up at EA Canada. I was leading this small "secret project" with a tiny 6-7 tea, that was essentially an action adventure, stealth kind of sci fi, fantasy, mystical thing we were hiding inside of the FIFA team. And Don Mattrick, who was running EA at the time, saw what we had and suggested that I go down to Maxis, meet Will and show him what we were working on.

And I was just so fanboyed out that I didn’t really ask why. What we were working on had nothing in common with anything that Will had ever made or seemingly was even interested in. Will and the little team that he was working closely with on a new project, spent half the day showing me what they were working on. In retrospect, it was clear they were working on a very very early exploration of Spore. It was very, very different at that point though. It was much more of a space simulation with planets forming and life emerging organically from the primordial ooze and whatnot.. Honestly much more Will Wright like than perhaps where Spore landed. And their main prototype was this 3D planet surface on which creatures were evolving, but it was extremely ugly :)... almost to the point of not being able to tell what was going on if you weren’t working on the project yourself.

And I learned then that the point in me going down there really didn’t have anything to do with my game. Because even though Will was incredibly gracious and gave me some great feedback, he acknowledged that he wasn’t sure why he would be specifically helpful. I learned later that it was for me to show them the world that we had built in our prototype. Our world was much much more shallow in the sense of there was no simulation or any of the cool shit going on in those primordial Spore prototypes, but it was nice tech and it was gorgeous :). So nothing really came out of that in either direction, but it was a fun way to meet Will for the first time.

[u/ButteryAwesome] [14 pts] [May 14, 2025]
The other times were all in the context of The Sims. I think most people misunderstand Will’s involvement in The Sims and SimCity franchises. Will is, at least internally, kind of notorious for not being particularly interested in sequels to the games that he’s made. He respected the teams and the games, he just moved on to other things. So for how clearly Sims 1 is a Will Wright masterpiece, the subsequent Sims games and packs did not really involve Will all that much. Shoulders of giants and all that.

His office *was* smack in the middle of the Sims 2 dev team though, but for a fun reason (apparently). Maxis was on a (not ground floor) floor of this office building in Walnut Creek, and the Sims 2 team got so large that it was spread out in this big L shape around one corner of the building.

The only office in the entire floor that had a balcony was smack at that corner in the middle of Sims 2. Will was focusing on spore prototyping and ideation at the time, and at that point had no formal involvement with The Sims team. but he was sitting smack in the middle of the team, in this corner office. Will is (or was) crazy smoker. And that office had a balcony where he could step out to smoke :). So he stayed in that office.

It was interesting, because even though he wasn't really engaged with Sims 2 at all, you'd sometimes just see him wandering through the team o his way somewhere. But when we did have things to specifically talk to him about, or we just wanted his opinion/wisdom, we could just go and take things to him. I took a couple of designs to him during that time, most notably Wants and Fears because I was pretty proud of those. He was always very gracious and very helpful, very willing to listen and to give thoughtful feedback.

And then on Sims 3, we did more "knowledge sharing" with the Spore team than any specific design input. Much of the early production Spore team had gone over from Sims 2 after launch, and the executive producer on Sims 2 (Lucy Bradshaw) became the EP for Spore, so those relationships were already there.

[u/bvsveera] [3 pts] [May 14, 2025]
Thanks for the insights about Will, and for reminding me about Spore (another game that I hold dear)! I always assumed that he'd played a bigger role in the sequels - I swear a portrait of a Sim version of him was in the background of one of the games' Create a Sim rooms - but it is nice to know that he was around during its development.

[u/jayarna7] [4 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Were there any known, consistent ways to crash or corrupt the game?

[u/GreenThreeEye] [4 pts] [May 8, 2025]
I would also like to know does the game try to keep memory usage under 2gb? I feel the game does this and does not try to use 4gb ram available to it despise needing to.

[u/LizaKhajiit] [4 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Can you give any details about Power Aspiration which was removed from The Sims 2 during its development?

[u/Prudent_Sleep9776] [4 pts] [May 9, 2025]
Do you feel that the cultural climate has effected the dialog interaction choices sims currently have available. Btw, Sims 3 has the best, and most in depth, often hilarious interactions. Did Sims 4 lose the great repetoire out of fear, or are they just that much more interested the building aspect of the game, or something else? Sims 4 build/buy kills Sims 3 for build mode, and the color wheel, admitedly, makes me use up so much more time. Congrats too on the advances with lighting issues.

Thank you for this awesome chance to converse.

[u/Impossible_Joke_7355] [4 pts] [May 9, 2025]
I'm such a big fan of the premade sim families in the Sims 2's basegame!!! Many of my favorites are from Strangetown and Veronaville in particular (big sci-fi and Shakespeare fan lol).

I'm curious just how much thought was put into their appearances and storylines, whether or not certain design/story elements needed a lot of effort or whether they were just throwaway gags. I'm also super curious about who exactly was in charge of making them? There's a special place in my heart for those people... I love the Sims 2 premades SO much :))

p.s. I wouldn't mind hearing specific details about how some of their designs came to be because, if you can't tell, I'm very fascinated by them! Tybalt's mask (and whole get-up honestly) has always intrigued me-it's a very nice and symbolic design choice... or Nervous' mohawk, Hermia's gothness, Mercutio's punkness, etc. etc. Any details that you remember, I'd be ecstatic to hear!

[u/Quizicalgin] [7 pts] [May 9, 2025]
I have a few questions that can maybe be answered:

1: When the team had to make a 64 bit version for mac, why did the EA overlords not let you do the same thing for the windows version of the game? Did they feel it wasn't worth the time, or was it in the case of mac they HAD to have y'all make it due to their 32 bit becoming obsolete?

2: With the re-release of Sims2 with some updates in an attempt to help it run better, do you think EA would do the same thing for 3?

3: It looks like there were a lot of animations from the sims 2 that were reused in the sims 3. Were they reused, or were they remade to better fit the new models? If they were reused, why were some animations and actions cut from the game? One immediate example is manually opening cupboards to pull out the necessary materials for cooking. It's a small thing, but it's an added bit of charm in the sims 2 that's absent in 3.

4: When it comes to content being split up, how much of it was a conscious decision vs what just ended up happening? Sims 4 is the most notable example among simmers, but it started as early as 3, i.e. Midnight Hollow/Supernatural or Lucky Palms/Showtime to name a couple instances that stick out to me. I can understand if that just ended up happening, as sometimes ideas don't come all at once. However, when things are released relatively close together and of a similar theme, it does look a bit funny from the outside eye.

5: If it can be talked about, did the contract with Katy Perry require the stuff pack Sweet Treats on top of the Showtime expansion pack cameo? Even for some of the wackier elements of 3, that stuff pack is still considered out of left field. Especially when a lot of its content would have been better included in EP itself, like the two high split dresses.

6: A fair amount of the Sims3store CC is corrupt or busted, and it was never really addressed even during the Sims3's active cycle. Was the team not allowed to fix content on the store when it was reported when items were broken? I don't mean a little buggy either, like the greenhouse growing station where parts of it just glitch out a little bit (magnifying glass never appearing), I mean full-blown crashing the game and making it unplayable. Most of the examples I can think of involve cars, such as the Renault sets, as those consistently would crash my game even on my current computer build. It's a shame because a lot of them were really nice cars...

[u/SkysEevee] [3 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Thank you for introducing the toddlers back into Sims 4!

[u/ButteryAwesome] [25 pts] [May 12, 2025]
Absolutely! I can't take credit for the fact of them being added and making them free, and all of that. Maxis was already well into what I jokingly referred to as their "Apology Tour" when I rejoined the studio, adding back in features that were absent from Sims 4 but which were expected from previous iterations (ghosts, pools, etc.). And toddlers was always going to happen at some point. They were clearly extra missing.

I personally like toddlers in the Sims as a designer because they do something that I have a silly name for. I refer to a specific aspect of design, as "perturbing the strategic landscape"... which is intentionally pretentious because it makes me giggle.

What I mean by that in the case of The Sims, is that you have a lot, a house, a family, careers. You've got things working. You have a sleep schedule. Your Sims don't pee themselves. Somebody can cook. You've got decent objects and whatnot. It's all humming. And you feel like you've *got this*, just like in real life sometimes.

And then you have a baby. And then they grow up and become a toddler. And they fundamentally screw up everything that was working perfectly, and you love them deeply, but now you have to re-solve all those problems in new and creative ways.

They perturb the strategic landscape.

And as a parent, that felt extremely core to what makes a toddler a toddler. You felt that in the Broke house in Sims 2 for sure, probably too strongly. That house was almost unplayable :). And I wanted to get that back double in Sims 4. I also wanted to add more depth, so that you actually felt like you were raising the toddler, and that to sort of drive that anxiety of being a parent, where you don't know what to do, and you're sure that everything you're doing is screwing them up, and sometimes it is, and sometimes it's actually making them something incredible, but you just couldn't see it.

The team really squeezed a lot more than was supposed to be in there into that. We argued for more time. We went way over budget and apologized. I apologized a lot. It was a huge effort across every discipline, and the team was very very passionate about it. There were a ton of people involved (on the design side that was Lakshmi, who was pregnant at the time and presumably not made less anxious by her design :) and later Dan Klein... I think that's the first time I've realized that the designer for toddlers had a baby while designing

them... that’s funny).

[u/iamhappytobealive] [3 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Are there any certain hidden features, interactions, notifications, moodlets, etc. that you haven’t seen very many people discover in the game even to this day? Are there any "sims 3 hacks" that ppl still don’t know about?

[u/GreenThreeEye] [3 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Why singing from showtime was not integrated to musical instruments and bands from late night instead of simport? Was implementation too time consuming?

[u/NikoTurtle] [3 pts] [May 9, 2025]
Hii , this is such an amazing experience and I thank you for all the hours you contributed to making the sims franchise what it is, anyways heres my questions:

Whats your opinion on the game/franchise, anything you would have changed?

How do you feel about EAs more dollhouse-y direction of sims 4?

How was your experience working on such a complex game with 2007-2009s very primitive technology

Has ur opinion on EA changed since you cut ties with them in 2018?

[u/Yolkema] [3 pts] [May 9, 2025]
1. do you have an insight as to how the scrapped "neighborhood aspirations" feature was supposed to work in sims 2? as well as the scrapped ’engagement’ and ’grandchild’ scenarios

2. a lot of people believe nervous subject and pascal curious in strangetown were an implied gay couple (even though they don’t have any romance relationship flags in-game). do you know if this was true?
there’s also been speculation about a possible scrapped gay couple in pleasantview. (some believe it was the roomies from ts1 because they’re the only basegame ts1 premades not included, jonathan knight said it might’ve been the dreamer family but could’ve been misremembering it, etc.)

[u/Timpola] [3 pts] [May 10, 2025]
Are you surprised by how much people have added to the sims games and how people play it? Was this planned?

[u/Foreign_Candidate] [3 pts] [May 11, 2025]
- Did world adventures intend to have a large scope? The biggest thing I noticed was how China seemed to be the most expansive and packed among the three. The hidden culture trait for China is consolidated as "Asian" instead of being specific compared to France and

Egypt.

- Were doing adventures in World Adventures intended in the first place, or did it develop from initially being like TS2's Bon Voyage where you just have vacations?

- Was there any particular justification or technical reason to why Sims 3 sims appear "glossy", as they're often perceived to be?

[u/Spiritual-Cup-1888] [3 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Question 1: What tool did you use to create The Sims 2? Like, where did you show the information about the neighborhoods, Sim instances, and everything?

Question 2: Do you have any old versions of The Sims 2 saved with you? Before E3 2004, for example. We would love to play an old version of the game, even if it is incomplete or obviously full of bugs. If you have one, could you please make it available to us?

Question 3: Can you give us more information about the families of Pleasantview, Strangetown, and Veronaville? How was the development of each one?

[u/centurese] [3 pts] [May 16, 2025]
Though this AMA was a few days ago - thanks for being a part of something so special to myself and to so many others. The Sims 3 is the game that I have spent the most amount of time on and the game I always come back to. It's a very special part of my life even now and it's good to know that someone that played such a large part of it holds a special place in their heart for it, too!

[u/RealisticrR0b0t] [2 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Remindme! 3 days

[u/RemindMeBot] [1 pts] [May 8, 2025]
I will be messaging you in 3 days on [**2025-05-11 13:03:13 UTC**](http://www.wolframalpha.com/input/?i=2025-05-11%2013:03:13%20UTC%20To%20Local%20Time)
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[u/luluse] [2 pts] [May 8, 2025]
What's your personal favorite of the Sims games and why is it Sims 2?
Who made the decision to scrap the open world from Sims 3 and replace it with Sims 4's claustrophobic, loading-screen-choked boxes and are they still working at EA?
Does EA have any idea how many players went back to Sims 2 and 3 and never touched Sims 4 again after release?

Thanks for the AMA!

[u/AloeVeraBogs] [2 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Hi Matt! Thanks for doing this AMA! Two questions for you:

1. In The Sims 3, there's a lot of depth in how different traits, wishes, or other features in one expansion pack interact with other expansion packs. What went into planning the design of how all the features in different packs interact with each other, and testing those interactions? I work in QA on a live service game so I'm always interested to hear how things worked on games that weren't live service!

2. What games are you playing for fun lately? I've been playing R.E.P.O., Split Fiction, Baldur's Gate 3, and of course, The Sims 3!

[u/NightmareFurbies] [2 pts] [May 11, 2025]
Would The Sims work nowadays as an open world game without the lag and processing power The Sims 3 was required to run with while keeping the same aspects that made the franchise great in the first place?

[u/MickiDumplings] [1 pts] [May 14, 2025]
What does "C#" mean?

And do you have any memoribilia from when you worked on The Sims franchise? Also, any fun BTS stories to tell? Things that you kept for yourself or maybe like a gift that was given to you.

What did it feel like when you first started vs when you left?

Thank you!

[u/irygunaln] [1 pts] [Jul 22, 2025]
Why personas system got scrapped?

[u/pomegranate-goose] [1 pts] [Jul 28, 2025]
I know this is old, but I have to ask: was making meteors kill all kids in the school an intentional storytelling decision? (I'm thinking of the patch note that goes "Sims automatically leave if a meteor is approaching, unless it is a school, in which children are not allowed to leave and will always die.") If so, what was the thinking behind it? Was it meant to be a commentary on real-world school shootings or something? Or was it implemented simply because the team didn't want to override the fact that children are hardcoded to stay in the building for the entire school day?

[u/VoltSh0ck] [1 pts] [Aug 28, 2025]
Im extremely late and there's a low chance you'll reply but hoping you read this.

For Sims 2 there was a few curiously cut features like Rain in the base game but was cut in development because it would rain inside and the team couldn't figure out how to make it not rain inside. Could you elaborate why that was the case? Also do you remember anything about a cut power outage scenario?

There was also a feature for reflective flooring which is seen on old development screenshots, can you explain why this was cut?

Another was the Power aspiration, any idea on what that Aspiration did or had? A lot of the dead sims especially in Strangetown have this Aspiration but obviously since it doesn't exist anymore their sim data ends up corrupted. To add to this in Strangetown there's two missing graves on the final game in Olive Spectre's graveyard but are seen in earlier development screenshots to be there, any clue why they're missing in the final game? It was speculated both of these sims were accidentally deleted although it isn't certain.

Lastly, how come some neighborhoods were cut or removed in the final build? There's screenshots and leftovers of old neighborhoods not seen in the final game but were there in

development and looked pretty fleshed out. On a final note, why was were so many objects, textures and even clothing and hair cut from the final game?

[u/Cherimbba] [1 pts] [May 8, 2025]
Why did my sim get in a tent in Egypt and become stuck haha RIP husband sim